

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The infantry reconnaissance platoon is a specialty platoon comprised of infantry soldiers. Unlike traditional infantry platoons whose primary mission is to kill the enemy, the reconnaissance platoon's primary mission is to provide the battalion commander information about the enemy. The battalion commander uses the reconnaissance platoon to gather critical battlefield information. This information is used by the commander and his staff during the planning and execution of combat operations. This chapter discusses the role, organization, missions, and employment of the reconnaissance platoon.

1-1. ROLE OF THE RECONNAISSANCE PLATOON

The battalion commander and his staff determine the role of the reconnaissance platoon. The primary roles associated with the platoon are reconnaissance and to a lesser degree security. The reconnaissance platoon does not have to kill the enemy to be effective. By performing stealthy reconnaissance and security tasks, the reconnaissance platoon makes it easier for the battalion commander to maneuver companies, concentrate combat power, and prevent surprise by providing him with current and continuous battlefield information.

1-2. LEADER SKILLS

Leaders within a reconnaissance platoon should be the most tactically and technically proficient soldiers in a battalion. Reconnaissance leaders must understand how a battalion operates in a tactical environment. They know their duties and responsibilities to the battalion—to provide accurate and timely information. Reconnaissance leaders are masters of stealth; they exercise initiative in the absence of guidance; they are intelligent, resourceful, dependable, and disciplined.

1-3. SOLDIER SKILLS

Soldiers within a reconnaissance platoon should also be the most tactically and technically proficient soldiers in a battalion. The reconnaissance platoon leader should be actively involved in the selection of soldiers. Reconnaissance platoon soldiers are physically fit; they are expert in skills such as land navigation, communications, camouflage, individual movement, and survival. They know the enemy's order of battle and equipment. They understand the importance of their mission to the battalion and what is required to accomplish that mission. Like their leaders, soldiers use their initiative; they are intelligent, resourceful, dependable, and disciplined.

1-4. ORGANIZATION

The reconnaissance platoon in light infantry, airborne, and air assault battalions consists of 1 officer and 18 enlisted soldiers that are organized into a platoon headquarters and three squads (Figure 1-1). The reconnaissance platoon is equipped with individual weapons, night vision devices, and communications equipment. There are a total of 16 M16A2 rifles and 3 M203 grenade launchers (one per squad). The reconnaissance platoon's mission and geographic location may require a modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE).

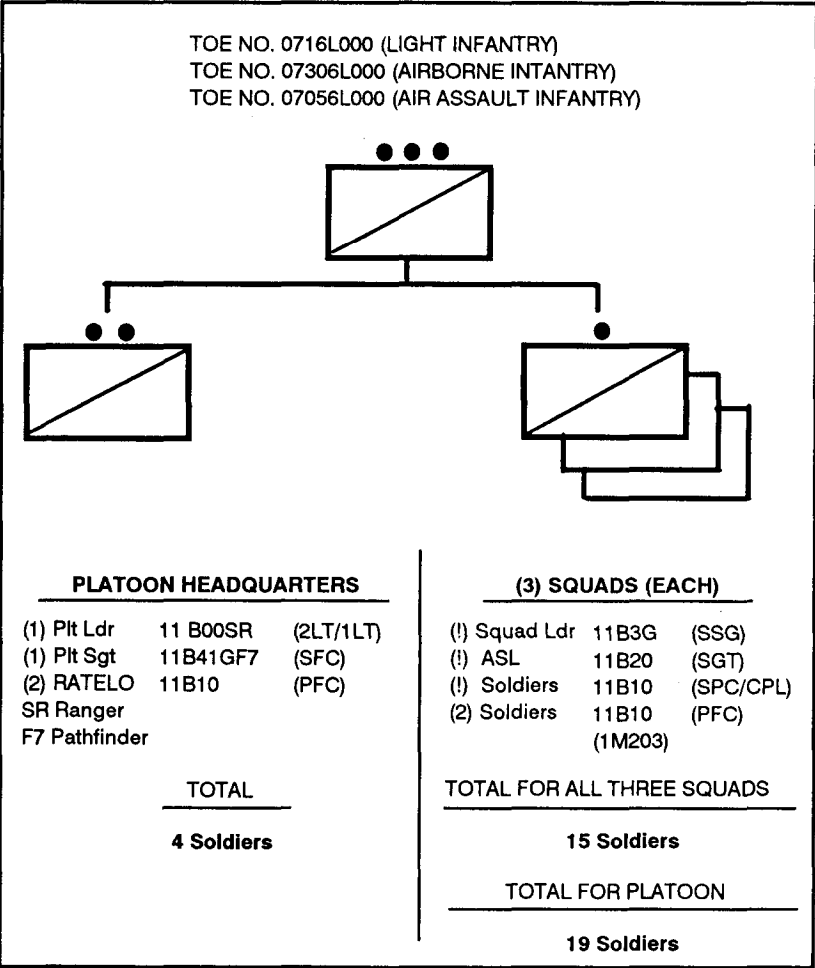


Figure 1-1. Reconnaissance platoon organization.

a. **Platoon Headquarters.** The platoon headquarters provides leadership and control of reconnaissance platoon operations. It consists of the platoon leader, platoon sergeant, and two RATELOs. The platoon headquarters controls and employs attachments provided by battalion.

b. **Squads.** Each squad consists of a squad leader, assistant squad leader, and soldiers. The squads perform reconnaissance and security missions as directed by the platoon headquarters. Squads also assist in tactical control and coordination.

1-5. MISSION

The reconnaissance platoon is organized, equipped, and trained to conduct reconnaissance and limited security tasks for its parent battalion. The platoon's primary mission is to provide battlefield information. The reconnaissance platoon also assists in the tactical control, movement, and positioning of the battalion's companies and platoons. The reconnaissance platoon is employed under battalion control, but it may be detached for a specific operation. The reconnaissance platoon can be tasked—

- a. To conduct zone reconnaissance.
- b. To conduct area reconnaissance.
- c. To conduct route reconnaissance.
- d. To screen within the platoon's capability.
- e. To conduct surveillance of critical areas of concern.
- f. To link up and conduct liaison.
- g. To guide maneuver forces.
- h. To conduct chemical detection and radiological survey and monitoring.

1-6. EMPLOYMENT

The reconnaissance platoon leader has overall responsibility for ensuring that the platoon accomplishes its mission. The platoon leader must know the tactical strengths and weaknesses of the platoon, and must determine the most effective and efficient method of employing the platoon. The reconnaissance platoon prepares, plans, and executes its assigned missions with the assistance of the battalion staff. Primary and specialty staff officers provide expertise for a particular battlefield operating system: the battalion S2 provides information on the enemy and terrain; the S3 assigns missions and integrates the reconnaissance platoon into the battalion plan; the fire support officer ensures that artillery and mortar fires support the reconnaissance platoon's plan; the S4 ensures that the logistical requirements of the platoon are satisfied; the signal officer ensures that the platoon's communications requirements are satisfied. The reconnaissance platoon leader should memorize the specific functions of the battalion staff and use its expertise whenever possible. With the assistance

of the battalion staff, the reconnaissance platoon leader has several aids in his “mental kitbag.”

a. The reconnaissance platoon can operate as a platoon or as separate squads under platoon control. The decision to work as a platoon or squad is based on METT-T factors. The reconnaissance platoon leader considers those factors while making his estimate of the situation. The commander and his staff consider the reconnaissance platoon's organization and abilities when planning missions for the reconnaissance platoon.

b. Reconnaissance or security operations may require the platoon to be more tactically mobile than the parent battalion. The battalion can provide only limited organic transportation to the light, airborne, and air assault reconnaissance platoons.

c. The platoon's small size limits its ability to conduct a zone reconnaissance. The terrain, enemy situation, and time available also affect the size of the zone the reconnaissance platoon can reconnoiter. The commander must consider tasking other rifle platoons to supplement the reconnaissance platoon for the intensive reconnaissance effort required by a zone reconnaissance.

d. The platoon may only be able to reconnoiter a single route during a route reconnaissance (depending on route length, enemy situation, and terrain). If routes are short and enemy contact unlikely, the platoon can reconnoiter up to three routes.

e. The reconnaissance effort of the platoon is established by the battalion commander and his staff. The purpose of the reconnaissance effort must be clearly stated. This prevents the reconnaissance platoon from wasting precious time.

f. The ability of a reconnaissance platoon to conduct security for the battalion is limited. The primary security mission assigned to the reconnaissance platoon is the screen—either moving or stationary. The reconnaissance platoon, in conjunction with infantry platoons, can effectively screen the battalion's front, flank, or rear.

g. The platoon's ability to conduct continuous surveillance is limited due to personnel. METT-T dictates the total number of OPs the platoon will establish. However, for continuous surveillance to be effective, no more than three OPs should be established.

h. The distance that the reconnaissance platoon operates from the main body is restricted by the capability of its communications equipment. With its organic equipment, the platoon operates two nets—battalion operations and intelligence net, and the platoon net.

1-7. TRAINING

Training is the cornerstone of success. Therefore, reconnaissance platoons must train for combat using the standardized training literature and doctrinal manuals that provide reconnaissance leaders with the correct procedures and principles to conduct training properly. They should also refer to ARTEP 7-92-MTP to find the specific conditions and standards for the techniques and procedures discussed in this manual. Training requires leaders to use their initiative and to make quick decisions. The training environment must be realistic and stressful. Training must challenge soldiers to master all infantry tasks, individual and collective, and it must constantly remind them of their mission, of their heritage, and of the physical toughness and mental stress that is required of them. Platoon training also promotes the cohesion and determination of the platoon so that, when plans go wrong, the platoon continues to carry out the mission.